

The Forgotten Empire

“The principle of development begins with the history of Persia (Iran). This therefore constitutes strictly the beginning of World-History” - Hegel.

Iran means land of Aryans. Use of the word 'Iran' goes back to thousand years ago in different textual sources like Avesta the holy book of Zoroastrianism. Iran was called Persia by the Greeks over the might of Persian Empire. In 1935, Reza Shah Pahlavi asked foreign delegates to use the term Iran, in their formal correspondence instead of Persia. Iran, with 8300 years of culture, and 2500 years of written history owns two influential religions of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism, became mostly Islamic by attack and massacre of Arabs in the 7th AD. But unlike other conquered lands by Arab Muslims, Iran not only didn't give up its culture and language but also made this new religion heavily influenced by its rich culture, built the great Islamic civilization and pioneered in Art and Science. Iranian people are sharing similar ethnicity over at least 11,000 years based on genetic studies.

After the Islamic revolution of 1979, a policy of Anti-Iranian Culture was adopted by the Islamic regime which led to the destruction of many historical and cultural sites and traditions. Most of Iranian ceremonies and festivals were abolished and Islamic patterns were imposed on people. While declaring the first human rights in 539 B.C by Cyrus the Great, Iran has a critical condition in terms of human rights.

With an oriental approach, both national and international photographers mostly tried to depict Iranian a nation without an established identity. People either are smoking or drinking – westernized youth (while wine is an essential part of Iranian culture) or execution scenes, covered women in black veils -living with Islamic ideologies- is always represented. This, is an incomplete narration of Iran and hides a main part of reality and shuts the voice of rest of the nation.

Breaking the stereotypes against Iran, showing cultural discrimination on the Iranian nation and at the same time the revival of Persian culture by Iranians in suppressed current condition, is the focus of this project. The story has been told within use of symbols and references to the historical sources, trying to visualize the spirit of Iran rather staying on the surface, avoiding the common stereotypical point of view. The famous Persian poet, -Rumi- says: "Anyone who has remained far from his roots, seeks a return to the time of his union with his root." The project and editing of the pictures have been done by inspiration from this poem.